

INTRODUCTION

Since 1963, the North Carolina State Archives has been publishing guides to its holdings, including state agency records, county records, private manuscript collections and Civil War material. While each edition has been expanded and improved, this eleventh revised edition of the guide to county records represents a major advancement in accuracy and standardization. In conjunction with each annual inventory since January 1991 and continuing as a full-time responsibility of the supervisor of the Local Records Sub-unit of the Arrangement and Description Unit since April 1995, many descriptive titles have been improved and standardized, inclusive dates corrected, and new material added. This edition describes more than 9,000 bound volumes and 21,000 boxes of loose records, as well as over 24,000 reels of microfilm, all of which are available to researchers in the State Archives.

The North Carolina State Archives began systematically seeking and accepting non-current local records from the various counties in 1916 under authority of a 1907 statute permitting their transfer to the Archives. Thanks in large measure to the tactful determination of Colonel Fred A. Olds, director of the Hall of History, seven counties—Carteret, Chowan, Edgecombe, Halifax, Orange, Perquimans and Wilkes—took advantage of the act and transferred some of their oldest records to the Archives. Forty additional counties had followed suit by 1924, so that the handbook issued that year describing the county records in the Archives included approximately 500 volumes, 90 boxes of loose papers and 414 boxes of marriage bonds. By the time the Historical Records Survey of the Works Progress Administration inventoried the county records in the Archives in 1938, another 950 volumes, 100 boxes of papers and 160,000 documents had been transferred from the counties. In 1941 the Archives, with the assistance of the Genealogical Society of Utah, commenced a program for microfilming many of the records, such as will books and deed books, that were generally retained in the counties. This program was interrupted in 1943 because of the war and not fully resumed until ten years later.

In 1957, the General Assembly authorized the creation of an "inspector of county records" whose task it would be to visit all the courthouses in the state and, with his staff, inventory the records found in them, microfilm volumes of permanent value for purposes of security, determine which of the records were not worth permanent preservation, set up schedules for the orderly transfer of permanently valuable non-current records to the Archives, and arrange and describe them for public use once they were there. This officer and his staff provided a solid basis for an effective local records program. By 1970, the local records staff had completed records inventories and disposition schedules for all 100 counties, and many county officers had availed themselves of the opportunity to free up storage space in their offices.

In 1981, an internal reorganization of the Archives and Records Section divided the functions of the local records program between the Records Services Branch, which helps counties and municipalities manage their records through scheduling, microfilming, and records-keeping consultations, and the Archival